

PARK & RIDE CONCESSIONARY BUS PASS CONSULTATION

Consultation on changes to the use of Concessionary Bus Passes
on Essex County Council run Park & Ride services

passenger.transport@essex.gov.uk

Introduction

Consultation on changes to the use of Concessionary Bus Passes on Essex County Council run Park and Ride services only from April 2020.

This consultation gives you the opportunity to let us know your views about the proposal.

Once completed please send to the address listed on page 7.

About Essex County Council

Our high ambitions for Essex and Essex County Council have begun to be achieved.

Despite the ever-increasing financial challenges facing us, we have continued to provide the services residents and businesses need.

What we do is driven by four strategic aims: enabling inclusive economic growth, help people get the best start and age well, help create great places to live, work and grow up, and transform the council to achieve more with less.

Our strong track record of financial management has enabled us to do this, operating within a legally required balanced budget.

Last year, that meant finding over £1 million a week in efficiencies, through innovating to continue to provide services at lower cost, with greater efficiency. Increasing this has meant investing in digital services and seeking to generate income.

We also continue to invest in Essex infrastructure, a key element in driving economic growth.

Even greater challenges

How we are funded is changing. By the end of 2020, our main grant – the Revenue Support Grant – will have been phased out entirely. This will mean a £46m reduction in 2019/20.

Our income will come entirely from council tax, business rates, grants which are specific to our services, and fees and charges.

As in previous years, we will aim to keep council tax as low as possible through generating income and revenue where people can afford to pay for services and where there is demand for them. Demographic changes – particularly an ever-aging, ever-growing population – which also create demand pressures, alongside inflation, also contribute to the financial pressures we face.

The combination of these factors means that, unless we think differently about the services we offer and how residents and businesses access them, we will not succeed in delivering our ambitions for Essex.

Unless we change, reform, transform, the services we are responsible for will stop keeping pace with what people need.

This means that, alongside those services which we retain and continue to invest in, or invest even more in than in previous years, some of them will change, and some of them will no longer be provided where they are now.

Increasingly, digital platforms offer us new ways of connecting with individuals and communities, and of offering services.

Leveraging the power of data to help us understand where the most pressing needs and the key challenges are, allied to new, more citizen-friendly ways of dealing with those needs through digital platforms is how we will develop our approach.

The way we shop, travel, work, learn and enjoy leisure time has been transformed over the past decade and the pace of change is ever increasing.

The information and analysis we now have at our disposal means we design services better for the present and the future. We need to make sure we seize that opportunity.

What we are consulting over

We are consulting on the use of the older person's bus pass on County Council run Park and Ride services in Essex.

We are also consulting on making a reduced charge for people using the disability based bus pass before 9am on these services.

None of these proposals will affect the use of bus passes on normal local bus services.

Background

The Essex Bus Pass Offer

Essex County Council (ECC) provides a bus pass in Essex to residents who are either:

- A) Older people who meet the national state pension age – as on www.gov.uk/calculate-state-pension or;
- B) Disabled people who have one of the types of disability listed on the website – www.essex.gov.uk/buspass

What the law say we must do

The requirement set out in the Transport Act 2000 and Concessionary Travel Act 2007 is that Essex County Council must provide passes valid for journeys run between 9.30am and 11pm Monday to Friday and all day on weekends and bank holidays. This is called the “statutory offer”. Essex County Council currently uses its discretionary powers under the Acts to offer pass holders travel from 9am to Midnight Monday to Friday. We are not proposing to change this.

Essex County Council is also required to leave bus operators neither better nor no worse off than had the concessionary travel scheme existed. It does this by reimbursing the bus operators.

What else we do

Essex County Council also allows passes to be used on the three County Council operated Park and Ride schemes at Sandon and Chelmer Valley in Chelmsford and at the Colchester Park and Ride. These include the Broomfield Hospital shuttle bus service from the Chelmer Valley site. The extension of the scheme to allow pass holders to use Park and Ride schemes is estimated to cost taxpayers around £447,000 a year. It is this provision for concessionary travel on Park and Ride services which is the subject of this consultation.

The cost of concessionary travel to taxpayers: This year ECC will spend £18.1m per year of taxpayers' money reimbursing operators for accepting bus passes. Under the law, ECC has to leave them no better or worse off than they would have been if the scheme did not exist. The cost of the use of concessionary bus passes of all types on the park and ride services is around £447,000 of that £18m.

Why Park and Ride services are exempted from the legislation.

Under the Concessionary Bus Travel Act 2007 (as amended), the County Council is required to offer a pass that is valid on any registered local bus service operating within Essex unless it falls within a small number of exceptions. These are:

- Services on which the majority of seats can be reserved in advance of travel (such as coaches);
- Services that are intended to run for a period of less than 6 consecutive weeks;
- Services operated primarily for the purposes of tourism or because of the historical interest of the vehicle;
- Bus Substitution (rail replacement) services;
- Services where the fare charged by the operator has a special amenity element.

Services in these categories automatically fall outside the statutory scheme.

The County Council considers that its park and ride services offer a special amenity as the fares include an element related to the provision of dedicated parking and other site facilities such as toilets and customer service and that as a result they are excluded from the statutory element of the Concessionary Travel Scheme.

Historically the Council has used its discretionary powers to include its park and ride services within the scheme allowing all pass holders to travel free after 9.00am. This has an estimated cost to tax payers of £447,000 per year.

Given the pressure on expenditure as explained above, the Council is now considering stopping accepting older people's concessionary bus passes on the park and ride scheme and instead use its powers under the Transport Act 1985 to offer older people's pass holders a £1.50 fare.

This may mean that some passengers choose to cease using the park and ride scheme and we ask you about this later in this consultation. In turn this may mean that the current cost of the scheme to taxpayers would not translate directly into a similar saving.

The Proposal

The proposals are from April 2020.

1. To change from offering free travel on the Park and Ride services for people who hold the **older person's bus pass**, to charging a fare of £1.50. The new charge would apply at all times.
2. Before 9am, **disability bus** (passholders currently pay full fare before 9am) will also be able to pay £1.50. **N.B. Disability bus pass users will still be able to travel free after 9am on production of their pass.**

Older pass holders:

Time:	Before 9am	After 9am
Current	Full fare	Free
Proposed	£1.50	£1.50

Disabled pass holders:

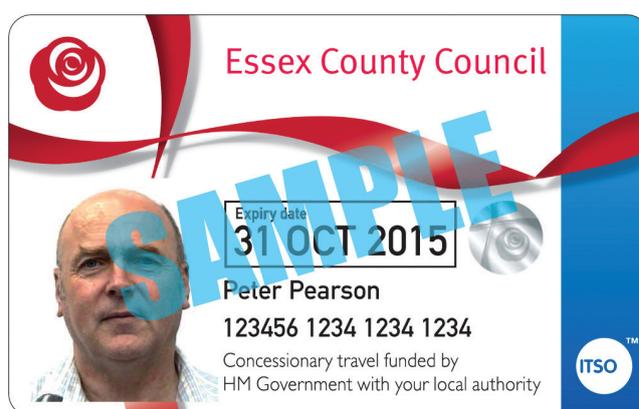
Time:	Before 9am	After 9am
Current	Full fare	Free
Proposed	£1.50	Free

ECC considers that the proposal will allow it to protect the most vulnerable groups and retain a concession for older people, while reducing the cost of providing the scheme.

We are asking for your views on the proposal. These will form part of our consideration about whether to go ahead with the proposals. Any cost reductions realised in this area will help reduce the pressure on other areas of spend, including tax payer funding for local bus services that are not commercially viable and Community Transport schemes, as well as wider areas of spend such as adult social care.

How do I know if I am affected?

If you use the County Councils Park and Ride services, including the Broomfield Hospital Shuttle, and hold an older person's bus pass, (it has a blue panel down the right-hand side and looks like the example below), you will be affected by the proposals because you will be asked to show your pass and pay £1.50 at all times of travel.



If you hold a disability pass, (it has an orange panel down the right-hand side - it looks like the samples below), you will not be adversely affected by the proposals. **You can still travel free after 9am and will also be able to pay the reduced fare of £1.50 before 9am.**



Why are disabled persons passes not included in the changes?

At present there are 270,000 registered bus pass holders in Essex of whom around 15,000 hold their pass on grounds of disability. Given the inclusion challenges people with a disability face in accessing key services and the relatively small proportion of disability entitled pass holders, Essex County Council is not proposing to apply any of the changes to disabled pass holders at this time.

These changes are proposed to come into effect from 1st April 2020.

The Proposals

a) That the concession offered by the County Council on its Park and Ride services in Chelmsford and Colchester to holders of older people's bus passes should change from free travel after 9am on weekdays (and at all times at weekends and on public holidays), to a £1.50 fare when showing their bus pass.

b) That holders of disability - based passes should continue to be able to use their free pass on these services after 9am on weekdays (and at all times at weekends and on public holidays) but should also be able to buy a £1.50 fare when showing their bus pass before 9am.

These proposals also apply to the Broomfield Hospital Shuttle service running from the Chelmer Valley Site as well as the main Park and Ride services.

Questions

1. Do you currently hold an Essex County Council Bus pass?

Yes

No

2. If you answered yes to the above is it:

Age-related

Disability based

3. Do you agree with the proposal that starting 1st April 2020 the concession offered to older people's concessionary bus pass holders using the Essex County Council's park and ride services should be a £1.50 fare instead of free as it is at present?

Yes

No

4. If yes, why? Please tick all the following that apply:

It's fairer for everyone

All users should contribute to the service

If you can afford to pay to run a car, you should contribute to Park and Ride

Other, please specify:

5. If no, why? Please tick all the following that apply:

Older people should receive taxpayer funded transport

It supports independent living and prevents isolation

Older people use it to access healthcare

Other, please specify:

6. Do you currently use an age-related bus pass on Essex County Council's park and ride services?

Yes

No

7. If yes, please tick which Park and Ride services you use:

Chelmsford – Sandon

Chelmsford – Chelmer Valley

Chelmsford – Broomfield Hospital Shuttle

Colchester

8. If the answer to Q6 is yes, would you continue to use the County Council's park and ride services if you had to pay a £1.50 fare?

Yes

No

9. If the answer to Q8 is no, what will you do instead of using the park and ride service? Tick all that apply

Park in town in a car park

Park in a side street (unpaid)

Park at a friends and walk

Go to another town to shop

Go to a retail park instead

Park at the hospital

Other, please specify:

10. There will be no change to services after 9am on weekdays for use of disability based passes.

We are proposing that holders of disability based passes should pay a £1.50 fare when showing before 9am.

Do you agree with this proposal?

Yes

No

11. If you do not agree, please specify why:

12. Do you have other comments about this proposal and/or an alternative suggestion related to the Park & Ride?

How to respond

1. Please complete and return this consultation questionnaire **by 5pm on Wednesday 31 July 2019**.
2. If you wish to submit a response for an organisation or group of people, please make this clear when providing us details about who you are. If you wish to provide a more detailed response than allowed for in this document, written anecdotal comments will be accepted by post or email. You should also respond to the questions in this consultation,
3. If you need help completing the survey or require it in an alternative format, such as large print, please contact us.

To respond or for further information:

Email: **Passenger.Transport@essex.gov.uk**

Post: Freepost RTKH-XUBZ-CJZS,
Essex County Council,
Bus Review Park & Ride
(Integrated Passenger Transport Unit E1),
County Hall, CHELMSFORD, CM1 1QH.

Telephone: 0345 743 0430

NB. The Information you provide as part of this questionnaire is anonymised and will only be used to analyse the public response to the proposals set out in this questionnaire. Your data will not be shared with a third party other than as strictly required to allow the analysis to take place.

ECC fully comply with information legislation. For full details on how we use personal data, please go to: **www.essex.gov.uk/privacy** or call 03457 430430.

About you

Our Equality Impact Assessment has highlighted some groups who may be disproportionately affected by changes to our strategy. Questions are asked to ensure we have identified any specific issues for equality groups. It is not compulsory to answer these questions but it would be helpful in our analysis of the results.

Your gender:

Male Female Prefer not to say

Other, please state:

Where in Essex do you live?

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Basildon | <input type="checkbox"/> Braintree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Brentwood | <input type="checkbox"/> Castle Point |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chelmsford | <input type="checkbox"/> Colchester |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Epping Forest | <input type="checkbox"/> Harlow |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Maldon | <input type="checkbox"/> Rochford |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Southend-on-Sea | <input type="checkbox"/> Tendring |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Thurrock | <input type="checkbox"/> Uttlesford |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Out of County | |

Please tell us which age bracket you fall into:

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Age under 16* | <input type="checkbox"/> Age 55 – 64 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Age 16 – 18 | <input type="checkbox"/> Age 65 – 74 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Age 19 – 24 | <input type="checkbox"/> Age 75 – 84 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Age 25 – 34 | <input type="checkbox"/> Age 85 – 94 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Age 35 – 44 | <input type="checkbox"/> Age 95+ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Age 45 – 54 | |

*If you are under 16 you should ask your parent / carer for permission to take part in this consultation.

Are you responding on behalf of an organisation?

Yes

No

Which organisation:

Do you consider yourself to have a disability, and if so please tell us what type of disability you have?

- Hearing impairment
- Physical impairment
- Visual impairment
- Learning disability
- Mental health need
- Other long term health condition that affects my transport needs (eg epilepsy)
- None of the above

Notes

Notes

This information is issued by:
Essex County Council
Passenger Transport

Contact us:
passenger.transport@essex.gov.uk
www.essex.gov.uk/department
0345 743 0430

Passenger Transport
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County Hall, Chelmsford
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The information contained in
this document can be translated,
and/or made available in alternative
formats, on request.

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